

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 AGR-05 COME-00 AID-05 OMB-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /087 W

----- 075205

R 190151Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6467

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 1190

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND, LA

SUBJECT: CLOSURE OF MORNING MARKET

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF VIENTIANE 0936

SUMMARY. VIENTIANE MORNING (CENTRAL) MARKET WAS CLOSED FOR REORGANIZATION WITHOUT INCIDENT ON MAY 16, ALMOST A MONTH AFTER AUTHORITIES HAD ANNOUNCED MARKET WOULD "SOON" CLOSE. VENDORS OF DRY AND CANNED GOODS WITH PERMANENT STALLS IN COVERED PORTION OF CENTRAL MARKET HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE THERE. SIX AUTHORIZED DISTRICT MARKETS AND SEVERAL SMALL PRIVATE MARKETS IN VIENTIANE PREFECTURE NOW SELL FRESH PRODUCE (BUT NOT DRY GOODS). DISTRICT MARKETS OFFER LIMITED VOLUME AND VARIETY OF FRESH PRODUCE. FEW THAI VENDORS ARE YET IN EVIDENCE AT DISTRICT MARKETS. PRICES AND AVAILABILITY OF FOODSTUFFS VARY AMONG DISTRICTS. CHICKEN AND SEVERAL TYPES OF RICE AND FISH WERE

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UNAVAILALBE IN SOME DISTRICT MARKETS AND ONE DISTRICT

MARKET CARRIED NO RICE AT ALL ON MAY 18. IN GENERAL, PRICES OF CHICKEN AND FISH HAD RISEN SLIGHTLY SINCE EMBASSY'S MAY 12 RETAIL SURVEY AND PRICE OF DUCK HAD FALLEN. MEAT STILL NOT AVAILABLE. THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS MORNING MARKET WILL BE SCALED DOWN IN SIZE WHEN IT REOPENS, AND THAT IT MAY BE USED AS ANOTHER DISTRICT MARKET RATHER THAN AS CENTRAL MARKET FOR CITY. END SUMMARY.

1. VIENTIANE PREFECTURE AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED IN APRIL THAT MORNING MARKET (CENTRAL MARKET FOR VIENTIANE) WOULD BE CLOSED TEMPORARILY FOR CLEANING AND REORGANIZATION, BUT WOULD BE OPENED AGAIN "BEFORE RAINY SEASON" (SEE REFTTEL). HOWEVER, DELAYS IN REORDERING VIENTIANE PREFECTURE'S DISTRICT MARKETS TO HANDLE EXTRA BUSINESS CAUSED AUTHORITIES TO PUT OFF CLOSING OF MORNING MARKET UNTIL MAY 16 (AFTER RAINY SEASON HAD OFFICIALLY COMMENCED). SATURDAY, MAY 15 WAS LAST DAY MORNING MARKET WAS OPEN FOR VENDORS OF FRESH PRODUCE. ON SUNDAY, MAY 16 MORE THAN 100 PATHET LAO TROOPS WERE IN MARKET TO PREVENT ANY DISTURBANCES AND TO TURN AWAY VENDORS OF FOODSTUFFS. CLOSURE PROCEEDED WITHOUT INCIDENT. VENDORS OF DRY GOODS AND CANNED GOODS WHO HAVE PERMANENT STALLS INSIDE COVERED AREA OF MORNING MARKET HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO KEEP THEIR STALLS OPEN.

2. BEFORE MORNING MARKET WAS CLOSED, PREFECTURE AUTHORITIES HAD ADVISED VENDORS OF FRESH PRODUCE TO ASK FOR SPACE AT THEIR NEAREST DISTRICT MARKETS. SIX AUTHORIZED DISTRICT MARKETS IN VIENTIANE ARE: SIKHAY, NONG DOUANG, THAT LUANG, PHONE PHA NAO, DONGPALANE AND SOUANEMONE. VENDORS FROM VILLAGES OUTSIDE VIENTIANE AREA WHO COME TO MARKET PRODUCE IN VIENTIANE IRREGULARLY WERE NOT REQUIRED TO RESERVE SPACE IN DISTRICT MARKETS, BUT WERE ADVISED TO BRING THEIR ID CARDS AND TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS WITH THEM. VENDORS FROM THAILAND WERE AUTHORIZED TO RESERVE SPACE IN MARKETS AT SOUANEMONE (NEAR CHINAIMO ON THA DEUA ROAD), NONG DOUANG (NEAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CINEMAS IN DOWNTOWN VIENTIANE) OR SIKHAY (PAST WATTAY AIRPORT). SEVERAL SMALL PRIVATE MARKETS SUCH AS THE SIMUONG MARKET HAVE ALSO CONTINUED THEIR OPERATIONS.

3. LOCAL EMPLOYEE OF EMBASSY SURVEYED FOUR DISTRICT MARKETS (PHONE PHA NAO, NONG DOUANG, SIKHAY AND SOUANEMONE) MAY 18 TO SEE HOW NEW SYSTEM WAS

WORKING. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, NEW MARKETS HAVE MANY FEWER VENDORS THAN MORNING MARKET AND PROVIDE LIMITED VOLUME AND VARIETY OF FRESH PRODUCE. NEW MARKETS CARRY ONLY FOODSTUFFS, NOT DRY GOODS. ONLY A FEW THAI TRADERS WERE IN EVIDENCE MAY 18. MANY VENDORS WERE APPARENTLY STILL TRYING TO ARRANGE FOR SPACE AND PERMITS TO SELL IN THE DISTRICT MARKETS. (EACH DISTRICT MARKET HAS AN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE AT MARKET ITSELF WHICH ISSUES PERMITS TO SELL.) MAY 18 SURVEY OF FOUR DISTRICT MARKETS SHOWED THAT CHICKEN WAS AVAILABLE IN ONLY ONE DISTRICT AND THAT ONE MARKET (SOUANEMONE) OFFERED NO RICE FOR SALE AT ALL. MOST MARKETS CARRIED LIMITED SELECTION OF RICE AND FISH. PRICES FOR CHICKEN AND FISH HAD RISEN SINCE EMBASSY'S LAST RETAIL PRICE SURVEY IN MORNING MARKET ON APRIL 12. PRICE OF DUCK HAD FALLEN. MEAT IS STILL NOT AVAILABLE ON OPEN MARKET AND BLACK MARKET RATE FOR KIP HAS RISEN STEADILY. (ON MAY 18, BLACK-MARKET RATE WAS QUOTED AS 8500 KIP TO 1 U.S. DOLLAR.)

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PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /087 W

----- 075328

R 190151Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6468
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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4. PREFECTURE AUTHORITIES HAVE CONTINUED TO STATE

PUBLICLY THAT CLOSURE OF MORNING MARKET IS TEMPORARY,
AND THAT MARKET WILL REOPEN WHEN DRAINS ARE INSTALLED
AND MARKET IS CLEANED UP AND REARRANGED. HOWEVER,
ONE STORY IN SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER VIENTIANE
MAY ON MAY 18 ADDED SUBSTANCE TO RUMORS THAT MORNING
MARKET WILL NOT REOPEN ON SAME SCALE AS BEFORE.
STORY LISTED SEVEN REASONS FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF
MORNING MARKET, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING: "TOO CROWDED;"
"TOO MUCH TRAFFIC;" "LOCATION IS AT CENTER OF TOWN
WHERE THINGS SHOULD BE.... BEAUTIFUL FOR CITY;"
"TO SAVE TIME AND MONEY FOR VENDORS AND CLIENTS IN
TRAVELING BACK AND FORTH;" AND "IT IS PLACE FOR BAD
PERSONS AND ANTI-REVOLUTIONISTS TO HIDE." ANOTHER
ARTICLE IN SAME PAPER ON MAY 18 DECLARED THAT WHEN
WORK OF REORGANIZATION OF MORNING MARKET WAS
COMPLETED EACH CATEGORY OF TRADER (SELLERS OF DRY
GOODS, GARDEN PRODUCE, FISH, MEAT, ETC.) WOULD HAVE
THEIR OWN AREAS IN CENTRAL PART OF MARKET AND THAT
STATE WOULD ALSO HAVE SPACE IN THE COVERED PORTION
OF THE MARKET TO SELL DRY GOODS AT A FIXED, LOW
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PRICE TO HELP SOLVE COST-OF-LIVING PROBLEMS. IT
WOULD APPEAR FROM THESE STORIES THAT MORNING MARKET
MAY RE-OPEN ON REDUCED SCALE, PERHAPS AS DISTRICT-
SIZE MARKET.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARKETS, FOODS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976VIENTI01190
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760193-0397
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760535/aaaabdqn.tel
Line Count: 200
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 VIENTIANE 936
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 MAY 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <21 SEP 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CLOSURE OF MORNING MARKET CINCPAC FOR POLAD
TAGS: EIND, SOCI, LA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006